

# Bringing boxing back to Temecula youth

**NONPROFIT: Danny Alvarado is working hard to revive a lapsed**

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By TIM O'LEARY / The Press-Enterprise

**TEMECULA** - A Temecula man who watched a youth boxing program go down for the count nearly seven years ago is gearing up for a comeback.

Danny Alvarado, who volunteered as a coach for a short-lived program launched by the Boys & Girls Club of Southwest County in 1997, is trying to cobble together a new program that also will emphasize education, self-discipline and teen leadership skills.

"It's something I've always wanted to do," said Alvarado, 58. "I want to see it go."

Ed CrisostomoThe Press-Enterprise

**Danny Alvarado has gotten back onto his feet and is trying again to launch a Temecula boxing program.**

Alvarado hopes to gain nonprofit status soon, which will allow the program to begin seeking grants, donated equipment and a facility of about 2,500 square feet. He figures it will cost about \$36,000 to get the program up and running.

He wants to pull everything together within three to four months so area youths can be throwing jabs and body punches, as well as boosting their school grades. He also wants to form a teen council and create a traveling puppet show to teach children the value of an education and the dangers of gangs and drug use.

"I don't care if we have to start in a sugar shack as long as it's a place to start," said Alvarado, a 13-year Temecula resident.

He hopes to find a property owner who will offer the program a place it could use for a few years. After that, Alvarado hopes the equipment can be moved to a gym the city plans to build along Pujol Street in Old Town.

Herman Parker, Temecula's community services director, said he has spoken briefly with Alvarado about the boxing program but said no arrangements have been

made. He said boxing rings and bags require a lot of space and that the start of construction of the \$2.5 million gym is more than a year away.

That doesn't deter Alvarado.

Alvarado said he realized the need for a youth mentoring program after he was robbed and assaulted by three teenage boys in Los Angeles in 1984. He said he suffered seizures afterward and his head injury left his face partially paralyzed. He subsequently lost his job as a factory supervisor, and his family put under stress.

"We're not going to stop that (violence) from happening, but we want to make them part of the system in a positive way," he said.

After moving to Old Town Temecula, Alvarado began working with the cash-strapped Boys & Girls Club boxing program. It began in late 1997, but folded several months later because the equipment was wearing out, space was tight and organizers were unable to raise \$10,000 to buy a boxing ring, new punching bags, gloves and other gear.

The program attracted about 70 youths and 15 adult volunteers.

Alvarado said his fledgling program has won the interest of numerous local adults, some as potential volunteer coaches and others as possible board members or helpers.

Ken Penders, a Temecula freelance writer and illustrator, is designing a mascot for the program. Penders, who draws "Sonic the Hedgehog" for Archie Comics, is creating a ferret mascot for use on program T-shirts and other promotional materials. He hopes to unveil his creation early this year.

Melissa Hazel-McCrillis of Murrieta said she has agreed to be the program's treasurer and mine her contacts as an advertising sales rep to win donations from area business leaders.

She said Anthony Miranda, a Pechanga tribal executive who was recently elected chairman of the state's largest tribal organization, supports the boxing program. He invited several youths to a casino boxing event and has offered to help the program in other ways, she said.

"It's a good cause," she said. "I've found an overwhelming number of people who are interested."

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